THE MIZAN NEWSLETTER

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The Mizan Newsletter aims at giving an objective and balanced account of current Soviet writings on the Middle East

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The accounts of Soviet writing given hitherto in the MIZAN NEWSLETTER have been concerned with individual Middle East countries or problems. The aim of this issue is to survey the background and wider implications of Soviet writing on the Middle East as a whole.

The first article, Russia and the Middle East, reviews briefly the history and background of Russian interest in the Middle East. The Soviet Union's present attempt to establish its influence in the Middle East is seen as the latest manifestation of a historic Russian ambition.

In Soviet Thinking on Middle East Problems, which draws conclusions from Soviet material reviewed to date in the MIZAN NEWSLETTER, an attempt is made to assess the relevance of these writings to Soviet inner policy, and to estimate the part played by Soviet Middle East experts in forming the Soviet attitude towards Middle East issues.

Oriental Studies as an Instrument of Policy is an account of the legacy of both scholarship and state direction which is inherited by modern Soviet oriental studies. The scale of the current expansion of these studies is indicated, and the high level of Soviet oriental scholarship today is noted.

Recent developments in Soviet cultural and economic relations with the UAR and Iraq are noted in Soviet Angle on the News, as well as an Iraqi trade unionist's account of the tasks facing the Iraqi trade unions today.

An index to the first volume of the newsletter will be found at the end of this issue.

RUSSIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

During the past year the MIZAN NEWSLETTER has seldom had occasion to refer to any Soviet writing on the Middle East published before the Second World War; and it has made no mention of pre-revolutionary Russian writing, or indeed of the Russian (as opposed to the specifically Soviet) attitude to this part of the world. It may therefore be appropriate to survey briefly the history and background of Russian interest in the Middle East.

Russia's relations with the Arab countries are of very recent origin; but her association with the Muslim world is far older and more intimate than that of any other European state. In the first place, the Mongols who dominated Russian lands from the middle of the 13th to the end of the 15th century were converted to Islam in the 13th century. After the end of Mongol domination in 1480 Russia proceeded to annex the Muslim Khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan, and these have been an integral part of Russia since the 16th century. This first Russian resurgence against the Muslim Mongols and the Tatars of the Volga region had, in the words of B.H. Sumner,* "something of the colour of a crusade in popular estimation and also in the eyes of the Church, although less so in those of the government". This same sense of mission remained during the subsequent conquests of the Muslim peoples of the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Before the end of the 17th century Russia's frontiers marched with those of the two most important Muslim states, Turkey and Persia. By the end of the 19th century the southern fringe of the Russian empire from the Crimea to Outer Mongolia was, with the exception of Georgia and Armenia, almost exclusively peopled by Muslims, whose number, including those of the Volga region, amounted to nearly 20 million. Some of these, and especially the Tatars, had become so integrated with the Russians as to be barely distinguishable from them, and many families with names like Rakhmaninov (Rahmaninoff) and Hakimov were generally regarded as Russian. The significant fact that the Muslims of Russia, unlike those of other empires, were not separated from the metropolitan country by the sea is often overlooked.

Tsarist and Soviet ambitions Russia's present frontiers with Turkey and Persia (which with some minor modifications still mark the limit of her 19th century expansion) can be regarded as reasonable for a great and growing nation. But for over a century Russia has cherished ambitions which stretch far beyond these frontiers, namely, the establishment of effective control over the eastern Mediterranean and the head of the Persian Gulf. Up to the Revolution she was prevented from realizing these ambitions, partly by her own political and economic backwardness and partly by the concerted opposition of the Western powers. Twice she has seemed to be very near gaining at least one of these objectives: Istanbul and the Straits were promised

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* Survey of Russian History, London, 1944.

to her by the Sykes-Picot agreement of May 1916; and in the Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement of 1940 the area to the south of Batum and Baku, in the general direction of the Persian Gulf, was recognized as the centre of the territorial aspirations of the Soviet Union. There is no reason to suppose that the failure which has hitherto attended Russian hopes and plans has deflected the Soviet Government from aims so closely bound up with Russia's history and geographical position.

Until its entry into the Second World War the Soviet Union's attempts to establish its influence in the Middle East had been no more successful than those of Tsarist Russia. This was due partly to Middle East nationalism, partly to Western opposition, but most of all to Soviet ineptitude and miscalculation. In 1941 Russian influence on and in Turkey and Persia was less than it had been in 1914 and the Arab world hardly regarded the USSR as a great power. By 1945, however, Soviet legations had been opened in Cairo, Beirut, Damascus and Baghdad, and the Soviet Army was once more in occupation of North Persia. With the defeat of Germany Russia was now in a better position vis-a-vis the Middle East than she had ever been before. But her attempt to bring about the disintegration of Persia during 1945 and 1946 showed that the Soviet leaders had not yet decided to abandon their earlier methods of direct action and subversion.

New Soviet methods After 1947 the Soviet Government appeared to adopt a much more cautious and conciliatory attitude towards the countries of the Middle East. Nationalist and neutralist trends in the Middle East and Anglo-American friction soon began to pave the way for the development of new Soviet methods and a more positive Soviet policy. This probably began to take shape after Stalin's death in 1953, or perhaps even earlier. But it did not become manifest until 1955, in which year the broad outlines of present Soviet policy towards the "uncommitted" countries of Africa and Asia emerged. This was the year of the foundation of the Baghdad Pact; of the Bandung Conference, with its affirmation of the five principles of peaceful coexistence (formulated by Nehru and Chou En-lai in June 1954); and of great advances by the pan-Arab nationalist ideology of Jamal Abd an-Nasir, with its increasingly anti-Western impetus. The adjustments of Soviet policy and ideology which were necessary to take advantage of these new developments were made during 1955, and received formal confirmation at the XXth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in February 1956.

Very briefly, the present Soviet policy towards the Middle East amounts to the abandonment of earlier methods of subversion, violent revolution and reliance on local Communist Parties, while retaining the ultimate aims of Russian policy. The new methods involve support for all elements, including the bourgeoisie, propertied classes and clergy, in what is called movements for national liberation directed against the West. This support is demonstrated by technical and financial aid and by the sympathetic study and presentation of Middle East problems.

SOVIET THINKING ON MIDDLE EAST PROBLEMS

A proper understanding of Soviet aims in the Middle East cannot be reached without some insight into the underlying Soviet assessment of the Middle East situation and its component problems. Such an insight is undoubtedly obtainable from an examination of the pronouncements of Soviet leaders, from Soviet Government and official statements, and from the writings of Soviet experts on Middle East affairs and political commentators. It is of course obvious that Soviet spokesmen and commentators will not say all that they are thinking about the problems confronting them, just as it is evident that much that they will say will be only an indirect reflection of their real thoughts on these matters; but, nevertheless, some estimate of their main preoccupations and of the main directions of their thinking can be arrived at, and Soviet views on many individual issues can be accurately ascertained. It has been said of Soviet writings on the Middle East that they "strike one as little more than academic exercises in fitting Middle Eastern political events into Marxist-Leninist conceptual categories".* But the fact is that, however they may strike the Western reader, they represent the carefully considered product of the very realistic deliberations of persons at or near the fountainhead of Soviet policy.

Iraq as an example To assess the relevance of Soviet statements to Soviet inner policy one may take the Iraqi revolution as an example. This is a subject on which the main lines of Soviet thinking are clear from Khrushchev's own pronouncements.

In a speech on 22nd July 1958, reported in PRAVDA, Khrushchev first expressed his gratified surprise at the 14th July revolution: "No one expected that the Baghdad Pact would so soon cease to exist." He went on to deny that the Iraqi revolution had any "Marxist" content: "The Arab peoples who have risen for a decisive struggle against imperialism do not conduct their struggle under the banners of Marxism but under those of a national liberation movement." Thus, from the outset, the relations between the Iraqi revolution and communism were a leading Soviet preoccupation. Later, on 16 March 1959, Khrushchev reaffirmed that "what is taking place is in no way socialism", but added that more "progressive" trends were evident in Iraq than in neighbouring Arab countries.

Soviet writers, taking up Khrushchev's pronouncements, were not content merely to echo them. They dwelt at length on the "progressive" character of the measures introduced by the Iraq Government; but at the same time they permitted themselves certain observations, perhaps not quite amounting to criticism, about measures they regarded as not quite "progressive" enough, such as the agrarian reform legislation (MIZAN NEWSLETTER No. 7, pp. 6-7).

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* Elie Kedourie, in PROBLEMS OF COMMUNISM Vol. VIII, No. 5, p. 48.

Further, they commented directly on the position of the Communist Party in Iraq, while at the same time keeping to the spirit of Khrushchev's declaration of neutrality in Iraqi politics; their main theme in this connection was the Communist Party's solidarity with the Iraqi Government - if not actually with all elements in it.

From this it is evident that the official Soviet attitude towards the Iraqi Communist Party is one of reserve and caution, and of neutrality as between it and the Iraqi Government, with individual Soviet commentators nevertheless ready to spring to the defence of the party if attacked (as over the Kirkuk events - M/N No. 11, pp. 3-5). Thus private sympathies pull one way, but public interest another; and perhaps the caution displayed in this matter by Soviet spokesmen is also counselled to the Iraqi Communist Party itself. Here, of course, one is in the realm of speculation; but the study of the relevant Soviet pronouncements and writings not only affords the material for speculation but also indicates what conclusions are possible ones and what are not.

Experts and politicians The above case of Iraq presents a straightforward pattern of official pronouncements echoed and expanded by political commentators. But many Middle East topics have not been the subject of official Soviet pronouncements, other than perhaps purely formal ones; and to understand the Soviet attitude on these it is necessary to examine the writings of the various Soviet experts in the field. These may reveal divergences of emphasis and discrepancies in detail, but they constitute a solid core of opinion which obviously has official approval.

For example, Soviet views on the Yemen are to be sought not in official statements but in the writings of Soviet authorities on this country (M/N No. 10, pp. 2-6). These in fact give the official line: that, while the Yemen is a backward country, its Government deserves support because it is "anti-imperialist" - that is, anti-British; and to avoid giving offence to the Yemen's rulers, no mention is made of any Yemeni "democratic" movement. At the same time, Soviet writers cannot altogether conceal their sympathy for anti-feudal sentiment in the country, as in Sultanov's account of his meetings with members of the Yemeni younger generation (M/N No. 10, p. 3). Here, then, is a case where a Middle East problem finds no reflection in Soviet official utterances, whereas the informed Soviet writer supplies the key to it in some careful formula, while perhaps at the same time exposing his unofficial sentiments in the matter.

Beyond this, however, a wider issue presents itself: to what extent is Soviet Middle East policy itself influenced or guided by such experts as those who express their opinions in Soviet publications on eastern affairs? Clearly, one can never know to what extent such expert advice guided, for instance, such a decision as that taken by the USSR in 1955 to enter the Middle East political arena; but (as is indicated in the next article) Soviet orientalists were already in 1954 coming into their own again, and they were ready to pave the way for Soviet-Arab rapprochement with such

articles as that by L.N. Vatolina, "The growth of national consciousness of the peoples of the Arab countries", in SOVETSKOYE VOSTOKOVEDENIYE No. 5 of 1955. In this, some months before "bourgeois nationalism" was officially declared respectable at the XXth CPSU Congress, Vatolina set forth the ideological bases of solidarity between the Arab countries and the Soviet bloc, and maintained that the Soviet Union was the natural friend of the Arab countries, having been the first country to recognize the independence of Saudi Arabia and having supported the Yemen, Syria, the Lebanon, Libya and Egypt in their struggles for independence and defence of their sovereignty. Since that time Vatolina and others have given shape to the Soviet image of the Arab "national liberation movement". This image is the one which has figured so prominently in Soviet pronouncements on Middle East issues, notably those of Khrushchev himself.*

Thus neither the pronouncements of the leaders nor the opinions of the experts can profitably be studied independently of each other; they complement each other, and represent a shared body of opinion whose historical development can be traced. For example, when Khrushchev said (PRAVDA 16.2.58) that the Arab countries and Israel could reach agreement if left to themselves by the big powers, he was not stating a personal opinion but was expressing what has been the basic Soviet conception of the Arab-Jewish conflict since the 1920's, namely that the conflict has been artificially created (M/N No. 11, pp. 5-8).

Opinions and formulas At this point a question occurs, regarding Soviet formulas for Middle East problems, which may indeed be asked in a general way about Soviet writing as a whole. Are Soviet writers expressing a genuinely held opinion when, as in the above instance, they deny the reality of Arab-Israeli antagonism; do they not do this purely for a propaganda purpose (namely, to lend colour to Soviet claims to impartiality in the dispute); and is not their own realistic view of the situation very different?

Obviously, it is of interest to ascertain the private opinions of Soviet writers, where these differ from their expressed estimates of a situation. But the view which is given to the Soviet public and the world is that on which Soviet policy takes its public stand; the personal opinions of those who formulated this view were submerged in it; and this official and publicly declared view bears an obvious and direct relationship to the formulation of policy, whereas the influence on it of privately held opinion is at least problematical.

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* But in other cases experts have clearly altered their views to conform with official policy readjustments. In an encyclopaedia article in 1950 V.B. Lustkiy belittled Arab culture as being a composite of the cultures of the Arabs' subject peoples (Tajiks, Uzbeks, Persians, etc.); but in 1957 (SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA No.1) he upheld Arab culture as a common heritage making for Arab unity.

But this is not to say that there is always only one opinion at any one time. Opinions change with time and with the course of events, and one can often detect the beginning of such an alteration. Certain writers in particular may seem to be more to the fore than others in expounding a new line. For example, the present Soviet tendency again to disparage the "national bourgeosie" as an instrument of progress, and to give corresponding emphasis to the role of the working class in national movements, is expressed with particular force by V.V. Balabushevich in an article on the workers' movement in eastern countries, in PROBLEMY VOSTOKOVEDENIYA No. 2 of 1959 (M/N No. 8, pp. 4-5). Balabushevich declares that "the proletariat is the motive force with the most solidarity and mass character capable of leading the [anti-imperialist] movement"; and he accuses the bourgeois nationalist leaders of opposing, from class interests, the workers' struggle to raise their "extremely low standard of living".

Balabushevich's article is a particularly blunt, perhaps extremist, presentation of current Soviet thinking on this issue; Soviet writers who comment on the policies of Middle East Governments - all of them directed by "national bourgeois" leaders - use more diplomatic language. Furthermore, the example of Iraq shows that Soviet writers do not at present voice the uncompromising support for "working-class" - meaning communist - aspirations which Balabushevich's article would imply. Thus on this matter the trend of doctrinaire thinking seems to have outstripped the trend of events which originally set it in motion. Here, as in so many cases, one sees the weakness of an ideology which must always compromise in the interests of policy, and of a policy which must always seek an ideological justification.

ORIENTAL STUDIES AS AN INSTRUMENT OF POLICY

It may seem strange to the Western mind that in the Soviet Union political writing on eastern countries, such as that referred to in the above article, should come under the heading of "oriental studies"; but this is the case. The Great Soviet Encyclopaedia, in its 8,000-word article on oriental studies (vostokovedeniye)* states: "Soviet oriental studies give principal attention to the scientific study of the national liberation struggle of the peoples of the East and to generalizing the experience of countries of the East which have freed themselves from colonial and semi-colonial oppression, and above all the historic experience of the republics of the Soviet East."

* The fact that the two largest British encyclopaedias contain no article on oriental studies, and indeed make no mention of them as a special branch of learning, perhaps illustrates the relative importance attached to oriental studies in the Soviet Union and the West.

However, this should not lead one to imagine either that there is no place for the scholar in Soviet oriental studies today, or that ideological preoccupations have always been paramount in these studies.

Oriental studies in Tsarist Russia The shape of Russian oriental studies was determined by Russia's geographical position and the exigencies of state policy. The Russian East of course was of prime importance; but Russia's contacts with Persia, Turkey and the Muslim world stimulated an interest in Persian, Turkish, Arabic and Islamic studies, and Russia's expansion in eastern Asia promoted the study of Chinese.

The Koran was translated into Russian by order of Peter the Great in 1716. In 1782 the Empress Catherine decreed that Arabic as well as Tatar and Persian should be taught in "the provinces adjoining Tatar, Persian and Bukharan country". Oriental languages were studied in the University of Kazan, founded in 1804, where the great Arabic scholar Kh.D. Fren (1782-1851) learnt his Arabic. From 1828 the Lazarev Institute in Moscow provided instruction in eastern languages, including Persian and Turkish. In St. Petersburg the Asiatic Museum, with its collection of oriental books and manuscripts, was the main centre of Arabic, Persian and Turkish studies, under Fren, until a faculty of eastern languages was started in St. Petersburg University in 1855.

In the latter half of the 19th century a number of societies devoted themselves to oriental studies, foremost among them being the Russian Archaeological Society, which, founded in 1864 in St. Petersburg, had the unique eastern collections of the Hermitage Museum at its disposal. The society's reputation as a centre of oriental studies is linked with the name of V.R. Rozen (1849-1908) who was appointed head of its eastern department in 1885. In 1886 he began its journal, ZAPISKI VOSTOCHNOGO ARKHEOLOGICHESKOGO OBSHCHESTVA, which continued without interruption until 1921 and was the leading Russian journal of oriental studies. Rozen was both an archaeologist and an Arabic scholar, specializing in Arab-Byzantine and Arab-Slav relations. He was a teacher of a number of eminent scholars who in their turn taught scholars of the present day. His pupils included N.Ya. Marr (1864-1934), who specialized in linguistics; V.V. Bartold (1869-1930), famous for his studies on Islamic history and culture, on Turkestan and on the Near East in general; S.F. Oldenburg (1863-1934), an expert on the ethnography of eastern peoples; A.E. Shmidt (1871-1939), best known for his Islamic studies, the first rector of the university founded in 1920 in Tashkent; and I.Yu. Krachkovskiy (1883-1951), the outstanding Arabic scholar of the period.

A branch of the Russian Archaeological Society was formed in Moscow in 1864. In 1887 an eastern department was formed within the society. Its famous president was F.Ye. Korsh (1843-1915), who held the chair of Persian Literature in the Lazarev Institute.

Communist reorganization On seizing power in 1917 the Bolsheviks from the first looked on oriental studies as a promising instrument for the promotion of world revolution, and they began to produce through their own personnel a new version of oriental studies designed to serve their immediate purpose. In Leningrad and Moscow new institutions were started and existing ones reorganized; but at the same time so-called bourgeois scholars were to some extent allowed to continue their studies independently.

Thus during the 1920s there were two streams of oriental studies in the Soviet Union. In one stream was the group of oriental scholars headed by Bartold and Krachkovskiy, who continued their activities in the College of Orientalists, which was started by Bartold in 1921 and replaced the Russian Archaeological Society; in the Russian Academy of Sciences, which continued to exist together with its new communist counterpart the Communist Academy; and in the Asiatic Museum. Meanwhile the main centre of communist oriental studies was the Scientific Association for Oriental Studies, NAV, formed in Moscow in 1921. Its president was M. Pavlovich, alias Veltman (1871-1927), editor of the journal NOVYY VOSTOK and rector of the Moscow Institute of Oriental Studies - the former Lazarev Institute. It is noteworthy that, while the Communist Party's reorganization of oriental studies was based on Moscow, the bulk of oriental studies conducted on traditional lines emanated from Leningrad.

The period of tolerance in academic studies ended with the purging of the Academy of Sciences in 1929. To the reformed Academy was given the task of imposing uniform Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy in scholarship. The functions of NAV were transferred to the Academy, and in 1930 an Institute of Oriental Studies was set up in it on the basis of the College of Orientalists and the Asiatic Museum. In 1934 the headquarters of the Academy was moved from Leningrad to Moscow, and in the following year it was put under the control of the Council of Ministers. However, the Institute of Oriental Studies remained in Leningrad until after the Second World War.

Post-war development In 1946 the Communist Party Central Committee resolved that science, literature and art were to be cleansed of the remnants of bourgeois ideology ("objectivity" and "cosmopolitanism") and that Marxist-Leninist principles were to be applied more strictly. Oriental studies were reorganized and expanded; and in 1950 the Institute of Oriental Studies was moved to Moscow. The Institute launched its new journals UCHENYYE ZAPISKI and KRATKIYE SOOBSHCHENIYA in 1950 and 1951 respectively.

In 1954 there were important new developments: in February Smirnov's HISTORY OF ISLAMIC STUDIES IN THE USSR appeared; a large and well-qualified Soviet delegation attended the International Congress of Orientalists at Cambridge; there was a marked reduction of violent anti-Islamic propaganda following the decree on religion of November; and it was announced that a new journal of oriental studies, SOVETSKOYE VOSTOKOVEDENIYE, published by

the Institute of Oriental Studies, would start publication in 1955. In 1955 there began the new Soviet drive in the Middle East and South Asia, and since then the scope and productivity of Soviet oriental studies has been greatly extended.

Since 1956 12 new departments have been set up in the Institute of Oriental Studies, including departments specializing in the Arab countries and Africa. In 1956 a Tajik (i.e. a Persian from the republic of Tajikistan) named Gafurov was appointed Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies; he is a politician rather than a scholar, and in addition to his academic duties he edits the popular monthly published by the Institute, SOVREMENNYY VOSTOK. In 1957 two entirely new oriental institutes were established in Tashkent and Baku, the latter being primarily concerned with Arabic and Persian studies. In June 1957 an All-Union Conference of Orientalists was held in Tashkent at which the following points emerged:

(a) More and more experts on eastern affairs are required for publishing houses, the press of the eastern republics, cultural relations with foreign countries, tourist agencies, trade unions, youth organizations and a large number of other institutions.

(b) Such languages as Hindi, Arabic and Persian are being taught in Middle Schools in Central Asia.

(c) Soviet orientalists are to concentrate their attention mainly on the disintegration of the imperialist colonial system and on the fight of the peoples of the East for state sovereignty and economic independence. (For new tasks for Soviet orientalists emerging out of the XXIst CPSU Congress, see MIZAN NEWSLETTER No. 5, pp. 10-12 and appendix.)

(d) Special attention is to be paid to the exchange of Soviet orientalists for study purposes with scholars of eastern countries.

In October 1958 the Congress of Asian and African Writers was held in Tashkent, and was widely publicized as a testimony to Soviet interest in the culture of eastern peoples.

Soviet oriental scholarship today The interest and importance of Soviet oriental studies are by no means confined to their political significance. In many fields of research such as philology, ethnography and topography the Russians have produced work which is at least the equal of and in some instances considerably ahead of that done in the West. Kh.K. Baranov's Arabic dictionary, A.F. Miller's Persian dictionary, A.N. Kononov's Turkish Grammar, the studies of the Kurds listed in MIZAN NEWSLETTER No. 5, p. 6, and SOVREMENNYY IRAN, a handbook of Persia, are works of outstanding scholarship by any standard.

In the classical field, too, much of Soviet work is well up to the Western level. A single recent issue of UCHENYYE ZAPISKI, a series published by the Institute of Oriental Studies, contained studies of Sa'adi's Golestan, the Shahnameh of Ferdausi and the Fifth Manazareh of Asadi Tusi, which are of great scholarly merit, although the Persians are not likely to relish their grouping under the general title of "Problems of the history and philology of the peoples of the Soviet East" (the works of these authors are regarded in the USSR as part of the Soviet cultural heritage, as constituting both Persian and Tajik literature).

Soviet oriental history is of less academic value since it is inevitably written from a Marxist angle and takes a different view of facts from that held in the West; but even so it frequently makes use of manuscripts and other source material not accessible to Western scholars and therefore of considerable interest.

SOVIET ANGLE ON THE NEWS

Below are reviewed reports on Middle East events appearing in Soviet newspapers during the period 5th November - 6th December.

Soviet-Iraqi relations An Iraqi delegation led by the Minister of National Guidance Faysal as-Samir arrived in Moscow on 4th November to attend the October Revolution anniversary celebrations. After visiting Baku, Tashkent, Kiev and Leningrad the delegation returned to Baghdad on 18th November. The delegation's visit was prominently reported in the Soviet press.

On 15th November the Soviet Ambassador to Iraq and the Iraqi Foreign Minister exchanged the instruments of ratification of the Soviet-Iraqi cultural agreement signed on 5th May 1959. In an interview with TRUD (17th November) on the subject of Soviet-Iraqi cultural cooperation Salah Khalis, who led the Iraqi delegation during the negotiations for the agreement, said that under the agreement 300 Iraqi students would go this year to the USSR and would complete the full course of study in Soviet universities and institutes. The Soviet Government would bear the full expense of the instruction and maintenance of 50 students and a part of the expenses of the remaining 250. Russian language courses and general education courses would be organized for the Iraqi students. On completing their training the students would do practical work in Soviet enterprises.

Soviet newspapers reported the visit to the USSR of a delegation of the Iraqi-Soviet Friendship Society led by the Baghdad lawyer Ahmad Ja'far al-Awqati. PRAVDA VOSTOKA reported enthusiastic demonstrations of Iraqi-

Soviet friendship at a soiree given for the delegation in Tashkent; TRUD reported that Soviet orientalists and others were present at a reception given for the Iraqi visitors in Moscow on 14th November.

The Iraqi trade unions The Soviet trade union organ TRUD reported on 14th November that the Iraqi Government had officially authorized the activity of the Iraqi federation of trade unions. On 15th November the paper published an interview with the secretary-general of the federation, Talib Abd al-Jabar. The latter said that Right-wing attempts to undermine the unions and to create conflict between them and the Government had failed. The unions would make it their task to regain the Government's full confidence. Of the many problems facing them, one was the question of wages. They had already secured minimum wages of 300 fils a day for unskilled workers in private enterprises, 400 fils for unskilled workers in state enterprises, 600 fils for skilled workers and oil company workers, and 350 fils for agricultural workers; but, since some trading circles were artificially inflating prices, the increase in real earnings was in effect somewhat less. Social security was another problem; there was a law, but it only affected a very small number of workers, mostly white-collar workers; a new law must be passed. But these economic aspirations were not the only concern. The unions' present task must be to explain to the workers the importance of increasing the productivity of labour and strengthening discipline and organization, in the cause of strengthening the republic and at the same time raising the workers' standard of living. Higher output must be achieved by the introduction of improved techniques, and all firms must attend to this. The unions' desire to cooperate with all patriotic forces for the strengthening of the republic was evident in the fact that at present they were not having recourse to strikes; a resolution passed at the trade union congress in the summer stated that negotiations between workers and managements were regarded as the best way of settling disputes, without however waiving the basic demands of the workers. There had been many cases where - as in Basrah - unions had foiled strikes which reactionary elements had provoked in the hope of damaging the democratic organizations and creating economic chaos.

Soviet-UAR relations On 28th November IZVESTIYA published a dispatch from its Cairo correspondent Kondrashov on the preparations for the beginning of work on the Aswan High Dam - the arrival of material and equipment at the site, etc. (On 4th December IZVESTIYA reported that the first group of Soviet technicians had left Cairo for the site.) Nasir's speech of 27th November expressing gratitude for the USSR's "unconditional" help was noted.

A PRAVDA dispatch from Cairo (14th November) gave some details of the expansion of Soviet-UAR trade. In 1956, said the newspaper, Egypt bought three tractors in the USSR. At present the USSR is selling the Egyptian region of the UAR up to 1,000 tractors a year. Soviet light motor vehicles and lorries are a common sight on Egyptian roads. There is a great demand for Soviet road-building equipment and spinning and printing machinery.

Apart from machinery the Soviet Union has supplied the UAR during the current year with 300,000 tons of wheat, nearly 2,000,000 tons of oil and oil products, and in addition wood products, paper, cellulose, metals, tobacco, chemicals, dyes and medicines. Soviet watches are becoming very popular. The value of Soviet exports to the UAR in the first nine months of this year was 20 m. rubles more than in the corresponding period of last year. The value of Egyptian exports to the Soviet Union in the same period was 293 m. rubles, compared with 223 m. rubles last year.

An agreement on Soviet-UAR cultural cooperation during 1960 was signed in Moscow on 21st November, according to PRAVDA. The agreement provides for wider exchanges in the fields of art, science, education, health and sport.

Visit of Yemeni delegation Publicity was given to the visit of the Yemeni delegation led by the Yemeni Deputy Foreign Minister Sayf al-Islam Abd ar-Rahman, which was in the USSR from 18th November to 1st December. The delegation visited Leningrad, Tashkent, Samarkand and Baku. According to PRAVDA of 2nd December, a protocol to the Soviet-Yemeni agreement of 11th July 1956 was signed on 1st December; "the protocol provides for the provision of technical assistance by the Soviet Union to the Yemen in the development of agriculture."

The Tudeh Party PRAVDA of 10th November published a letter of greeting sent by the Central Committee of the Tudeh Party to the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party on the occasion of the October Revolution anniversary. This said that the peoples of Persia continued to groan in misery under imperialism; that several times in the last 42 years they had been on the point of winning their freedom, but dissension among them, exploited by imperialism and reaction, had prevented this; and that the formation of a single united anti-imperialist front of all progressive and patriotic forces was now vital - the Tudeh Party had "already taken some steps in this direction". (Note: It is a long time since any communication from the Tudeh Party was published in a Soviet newspaper. No indication of the present headquarters of the party was given - Ed.)

Turkey and the USA IZVESTIYA and TURKMENSKAYA ISKRA of 13th November said that the Turkish newspaper YENI GUN had recently published an open letter to the US Ambassador in Ankara complaining about the conduct of US servicemen in Turkey, who, it said, were losing all respect and authority among the Turkish population. YENI GUN said that Americans in Turkey had been engaging in black market speculation and currency smuggling; they had raped Turkish girls, and had torn up the Turkish flag. On 5th November the US Air Force Lieutenant-Colonel Morrison Allen had driven his car into a detachment of Turkish soldiers, seriously injuring eleven of them, three of whom had died; and he had not even had to appear in court.

KAZAKHSTANSKAYA PRAVDA of 17th November quoted YENI GUN for the report that two US servicemen in Adana had climbed a minaret and begun to shout, imitating the muezzin calling the faithful to prayer. "'Our mosques', the newspaper writes, 'were the only place which the Americans had not yet defiled, but now they have crossed even this limit.'"

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